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Mr R Culham
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Culham

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 14 June 2012 to look at work in history.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and attain standards that are broadly average.
- They show a good knowledge of aspects of life in different historical periods. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the process of evacuation in Britain in the Second World War and of other aspects of life in wartime. Year 4 pupils showed a good knowledge of mummification in ancient Egypt.
- The school identified the need to develop pupils' chronological understanding at the start of the school year and some good progress has been made. Year 6 pupils were able to sequence four images of houses across time accurately and showed a developing grasp of the intervals between the historical periods represented.

- Year 6 pupils were able to set photographs of scenes of the evacuation of children into context quickly and identify what was taking place in each with some confidence. However, they accepted the photographs at face value too readily and found it difficult to evaluate the conclusions they might draw.
- History makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. They enjoy the subject and particularly appreciate the 'hands-on' approaches that their teachers often devise, as well as the opportunities for learning provided by visits and visitors.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers place a high priority on engaging pupils' interest through practical activities, such as investigating the 'Birchfield Box' of Egyptian artefacts, and whole-day activities, for example the Victorian day in Year 1.
- A wide range of historical sources is used and pupils are given appropriate opportunities to make observations and draw conclusions. However, approaches to supporting older pupils in evaluating the utility and reliability of sources are at an early stage of development.
- In lessons observed, teachers asked good questions to probe pupils' initial thinking and to support them in further consideration. Practical activities were designed to build understanding, although sometimes there was insufficient time to exploit their full potential. Pupils were engaged by the activities and behaviour was good.
- Teachers make judgements of pupils' attainment at the end of the year and pass on useful information on relative strengths and weaknesses to the next teacher. Currently, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently refer to pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in history and is mostly focused on literacy objectives. While teachers share examples of pupils' work informally, there is no bank of moderated materials readily available to guide staff in making their assessments.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- Variations in the numbers on roll result in occasional changes in the organisation of the classes and history topics are carefully adjusted to ensure that pupils receive an appropriate curriculum.
- History is taught within a new 'creative curriculum' where suitable cross-curricular links are in place. The subject is making a good contribution to developing pupils' skills in literacy and in using information and communication technology.
- A document setting out progression in historical skills provides useful guidance for staff. In places, though, the focus is not sharp enough to

support staff fully, for example in developing pupils' ability to use and evaluate sources.

- Enrichment of the curriculum is good. A wide range of visits, for example to Corfe Castle and Montacute House, and visitors, such as 'King Hal' and local museum staff, fosters pupils' interest well.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Leadership and management of history, in common with the other foundation subjects, is a shared endeavour between three staff teams established in the autumn of 2011. Self-evaluation is accurate and appropriate priorities for development are identified as a result of systematic checks of teachers' planning and pupils' work.
- Data provide a clear picture of pupils' attainment in each year group. However, further analysis, for example to explore the performance of groups of pupils over time, is not routinely carried out.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making more systematic use of assessment information to compare pupils' performance in history over time
- enabling older pupils to evaluate sources more effectively
- providing more subject-specific marking of pupils' work and a bank of moderated examples to help staff in making assessments.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector